

Testimony of

Mr. Jeffrey Thompson

July 21, 2004

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee. My name is Jeffrey Thompson, I am a resident of Jacksonville, Arkansas which is located 15 miles Northeast of Little Rock. My father was a downwind radiation exposure victim.

My father, Ward Paul Thompson, was born in 1918 in Beaver, Utah and was employed as an engineer on the railroad for over 45 years. He lived in Beaver and in Minersville. When the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act first became law, in 1990, my father would not have been able to receive compensation because the type of cancer he had was not one for which compensation could be paid. My brother Kenneth, my sister Sue Ann, and I are grateful for the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act Amendments which became law in the summer of 2000. These amendments added Colon Cancer which is what my father eventually died from in October of 2003.

In February of this year, my brother Kenneth Paul Thompson, my sister Sue Ann Pace, both of Milford, Utah and me filed a claim for compensation under the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act. Several weeks after filing the claim we received a short letter from the Radiation Exposure Compensation Program which told us that they had received our claim and that it they would begin processing it. The letter also explained that under the law, the Radiation Exposure Compensation Program had one year to make their decision if our claim met all the requirements necessary to qualify for compensation.

Several months after receiving the first letter from the Radiation Exposure Compensation Program, my sister received a second letter which told her that she needed to provide a copy of the marriage license which showed her marriage to Mr. Cliff Pace who had passed away in 1990. My sister, Sue Ann, told the claims examiner that she had the marriage license showing her marriage to Cliff Pace and she asked the claims examiner if she needed to send a copy of her marriage license showing her marriage to Mr. Evan Skeem in 1965 which had ended in 1981. My sister was concerned that this marriage license would be hard to get since the marriage had occurred almost forty years before and had happened in another state. She expressed these concerns to the claims examiner. The claims examiner responded that my sister should send the marriage license that she had in her possession but the examiner gave no indication that my sister would have to send the certificate of the first marriage. Approximately June 15th my sister received a letter from a different claims examiner which indicated that the Radiation Exposure Compensation Program needed the copy of the marriage license for my sister's first marriage to Evan Skeem in 1965. My sister is in the process of getting that marriage license from Nevada. We are concerned about the delay that may arise in processing our claim due to the six weeks that passed between my sister receiving the letter that asked for the marriage license for her second, more recent marriage, and the letter that asked for the copy of the marriage license from the first marriage.

We also had another problem with another aspect of the claims process. I am not the biological son of Ward Paul Thompson. I lived with him for several years before I was legally adopted by him in 1974 at the age of 10. I live with him the rest of my childhood years before I reached the age of adulthood. I always considered him my father and he always held me out as his son. The adoption papers were sealed by the court in which the adoption had been finalized.

After my brother, my sister, and I had filed our claim for compensation, I received a letter from the Radiation Exposure Compensation Program which told me that I needed to obtain copies of the adoption papers in order to prove my adoption by Ward Thompson. To my brother, my sister and to myself, this was difficult. We retained an attorney in Beaver, Utah who filed the proper action and was able to have the adoption papers unsealed so that we could provide them to the Radiation Exposure Compensation Program.

We have not yet received approval of our claim but hope to have it approved soon. It would mean a great deal to us. The financial compensation would be very helpful and having the government acknowledge that it had a hand in causing the cancer that required him to suffer would also be of comfort to my brother, my sister, and myself.

We have also heard of other claims that have not been paid because people could not find fifty year old copies of electric bills, rent receipts, or other documents that would prove the details of their claims. We would ask you to try to make the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act as easy as you can to the people who file claims. Thank you.